

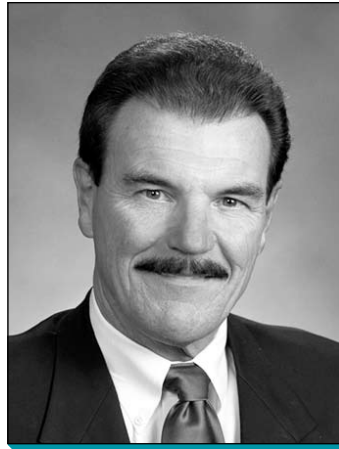
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CAPITOL LETTER:

Legislative Session Preview

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Committees:

- Capital Budget, Chair
- Appropriations
- Appropriations Subcommittee on Education
- Select Committee on Pension Policy

January 2007

Dear Neighbor:

I hope you and your loved ones are starting 2007 with high spirits and in good health. It is a true privilege to represent you in Olympia where we're all geared-up to achieve results during this Legislative Session.

As always, my work will reflect our community's concerns. Among the most pressing issues we'll be facing are creating jobs, ensuring we give children a better future and making health care more affordable for everybody.

This biennium I'll be leading the House Capital Budget Committee, which establishes policies for building and repairing public buildings – including K-12 schools and higher education – and policies that help local communities develop infrastructure, housing, and cultural facilities.

I'm looking forward to my new assignment because I believe every child in Washington should attend a good school; every family should have a living income; every community a strong infrastructure, and that our state has first-class facilities in our colleges and universities. That's the bottom line to a healthier, more vibrant quality of life.

I want communities and businesses throughout the state to achieve economic vitality through well-planned development approaches. To get there, I will work on strategic construction projects, based on identified needs. Local economies also benefit by the creation of dependable, family-wage jobs for hundreds of Washington citizens.

Please stay in touch, your input is extremely valuable. Ann Tjersland, my assistant, and I look forward to your letters, e-mails, and phone calls. Keep in mind that the decisions I make in Olympia are based on what happens in your daily life in Vancouver.

Sincerely,

State Representative Bill Fromhold • 49th Legislative District

JANUARY 2007

Representative Bill Fromhold

Today's Learners:

...are tomorrow's workforce and we want to make sure it is strong and competitive, so investing in our students is plain common sense. This is especially true when right now, in Washington less than 50 percent of children enter kindergarten ready to learn; only 74 percent of ninth graders graduate from high school with their peers, and only 60 percent of African American and Hispanic students graduate from high school with their peers.



Because one-third of the adult population has only a high school diploma or less, we are importing educated workers from other states and nations to fill our best jobs, leaving the less stable and lower paying jobs for people educated in Washington. And nearly one-quarter of employers report difficulty finding qualified job applicants with occupation-specific skills.

More than ever before, it's become evident that education is the currency of today's international economy; we must therefore focus on the education transaction that can be summarized as follows:

1. Insuring that students are ready to learn.
2. Providing the necessary resources so that our teachers are prepared to teach.
3. Using curriculum that is aligned with our goals.
4. Providing adequate time for the teachers to accomplish their job.
5. Providing adequate access to post secondary education to all high-school graduates.

Washington has the constitutional duty to provide a basic education for all children from kindergarten through twelfth grade. But we must start working on changing our system from early learning through graduate school so that education is not merely basic, but rather excellent.

I served on the Washington Learns Steering Committee that carried out the 18-month comprehensive review of education funding in Washington State. Governor Gregoire recently unveiled the final report, and I'd like to share with you some of the recommendations' highlights for a world-class education system:

Early Learning

- Make information and support readily available to parents, grandparents, and other caregivers.
- Expand the availability of high-quality early learning opportunities.
- Expand early learning teacher training.
- Develop and implement a kindergarten readiness assessment tool.
- Phase in voluntary all-day kindergarten for all students.
- Prioritize funding to reduce K-3 class size.
- Provide pilot project funding for redesigning K-3 classroom grouping children based on their abilities.



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College and Workforce Training

- Give high school and college students ample career information and support.
- Provide support for low-income students who would be the first in their family to graduate from college.
- Increase access to workforce training for low-income and limited English proficient adults.
- Focus investments to generate more graduates of college and apprenticeship programs in high-demand fields.

Math & Science

- Develop materials to train child care and early education teachers.
- Bring world class math and science into classrooms.
- Build expertise in math and science teaching by supporting pre-service training.
- Attract more math and science teachers.
- Utilize public-private partnerships to get students excited about math and science.
- Expand incentives and opportunities for students seeking math and science related certificates and degrees.
- Partner with after-school programs to support math learning.

Quality and Accountability

- Create a P-20 Council to track progress toward long-term goals and to improve student transitions through the education system.
- Develop a financial health monitoring system for K-12.
- Establish a state tuition policy for higher education.
- Develop a ten-year plan for the enrollments needed in colleges and universities to accommodate high school graduates and adults, with an emphasis on increased degrees in high demand fields.

The full report recommends a 10 year phase-in timeline for achieving the recommendations and goals of Washington Learns, but a significant down payment is expected this session.

Personalized Learning

- Expand and make the most of learning time.
- Improve learning opportunities for English language learners.
- Establish programs to reach students who have dropped out of school.
- Use technology to personalize and expand learning opportunities, increase opportunities for career and technical education.
- Reflect diversity and support cultural understanding.
- Focus on effective teaching practices with special education students.

Public health financing

A bipartisan joint select committee on public health financing has agreed upon recommendations to increase state funding for core local public health activities, such as preventing the spread of communicable diseases, emergency preparedness (i.e. flood, earthquakes, pandemic flu), health promotion and prevention of chronic disease, and ensuring the safety of our drinking water and the food we eat in restaurants.

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Covering all kids by 2010: next steps

We enacted legislation in 2005 with the goal of having all children in Washington State under health coverage by 2010. Between 2004 and 2006, the number of uninsured children declined by about 22,000, so we're making significant progress. But we're not there yet; there are still about 50,000 low-income uninsured children.



This session we'll introduce legislation to step-up outreach to those families, simplify applying for help from the state, and link kids to "medical homes" where they can get immunization and other preventive services, as well as care when they're sick.

In other words, it's not enough just to cover children; we want to invest in healthier kids.

Long Term Care Task Force

This group will bring forward recommendations to improve our long term care system, such as providing more support/respite for family caregivers, helping folks with chronic illnesses that need to navigate the health and long term care systems; doing a better job of coordinating care across the medical and long term care systems, and increasing consumer protections for long term care insurance.



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